PASSAIC GARY PLAN SCHOOL LESSON TO NEW YORK

Utility and Worth of Wirt System Demonstrated There Beyond Specious Disputation by Greatly Enriched Curriculum for More Than 1600 Children.

"In the machine shop the class cooperated with the boys in the cabinet shop in making some of the looms we had seen in the textile shop."

By Randolph L. Bourne.

NEW YORK people who are still trying to prove that the Gary plan is impracticable for New York and that it is still a doubtful and untested experiment have a poor argument for their cause in the Gary-ized school of a nearby city, which, the superintendent declares, has already passed far beyond the stage of experimentation and is an approved success. Just twelve miles from New York, in Passaic, N. J., there is a large Gary school in operation which is a living refutation of the objections which have been so frequently heard in New York to the new plan.

The Passaic Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Frederick S. Shepherd, was one of a group of New Jersey schoolmasters who visited Gary last winter. He was not one of those who believed that, "though it might work in Gary, it would not work in Passaic." Neither did it hurt his personal dignity to think of "a man from outside coming in to show us how to run our schools." His business was to give Passaic children the best school he could find, and he did not care where he got his ideas of that best school. He saw the significance of Superintendent Wirt's work, study and play school. He studied his local conditions and adapted the Gary plan to the needs of Passaic children. Passaic is an industrial city of 84,000 people, situated within the metropolitan area of New York, and theoretically as much a part of the metropolis as is The Bronx or Flatbush. The city has grown with great rapidity and is said to have now the highest percentage of foreign-born of all cities in the country.

This rapid growth and the industrial character of the community have created for Passaic exactly the same school problems which New York has been forced to meet. For all practical purposes, social conditions in Passaic are identical with those in many districts in New York. The schools have been swamped by the incoming population. Hundreds of children have had to be put on part-time schedules. There was, moreover, a great demand for vocational training for the elementary school children who would be absorbed by the great textile and machinery mills of Passaic and Paterson. The city could not build schools fast enough to provide every child with a seat under the traditional school plan of an exclusive study school. Neither could it afford the expensive trade schools which would be necessary to meet the demand for trade training.

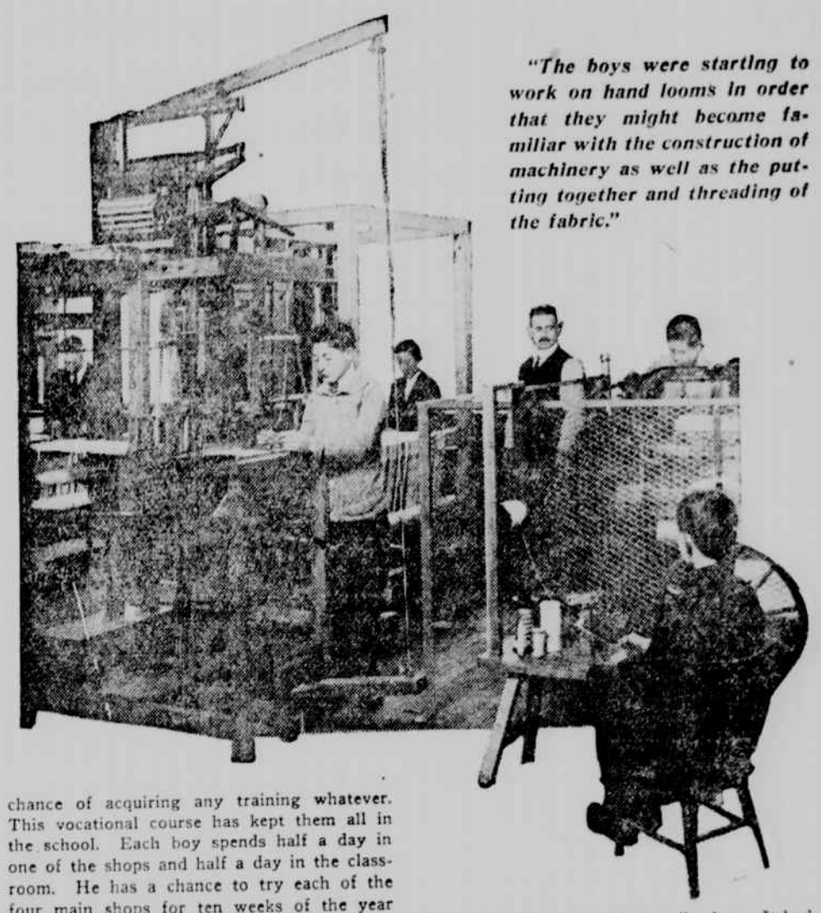
School No. 10 in Passaic is situated in the heart of the great mill district. Of the 10,500 children in the city schools 1,644 are in School 10, most of them foreign-born or of foreign parentage. Before the Gary reorganization it was able to give a seat and full-time schooling to less than 1,100 children. Twenty classes were on part time. The school plant consists of two buildings. One is an excellent modern building, with wide halls and a fine auditorium. The other is a small and old primary building, about to be condemned. There were small playgrounds about both buildings, but no gymnasium, no shops, no nature study laboratory, no school gardens.

How this school was turned, at small cost, into a great enriched work, study and play school on the Wirt plan, accommodating not only the 1,100 children, but all the part-time children as well, with a school day for every one of six hours and twenty minutes, is a record of decision and intelligence which throws into unfavorable contrast the delay and red tape connected with the equipping of the two Gary schools in New York. The work was authorized in June, 1915. When school gathered again in the fall No. 10 was a transformed school plant. At the back of the playground had been erected a two-story gymnasium of concrete and glass, sixty by eighty feet. Two industrial arts rooms had been fitted up, and the sewing and cooking rooms improved. A nature study room had been fitted with laboratory fixtures. The old building had been turned into a shop annex. Walls between classrooms had been knocked out, making four large and light industrial shops, with two studios for drawing classes. Equipment for textile shop, machine shop, cabinet shop and printery had been installed. The playgrounds of the annex had been ploughed up for gardens in the spring. The transformed school plant was then organized on the duplicate-school plan, with alternating X and Y schools, with classes alternating between the classrooms and the gymnasiums, shops, auditoriums and studios. A programme of ten periods a day was arranged, forty minutes for each period and an hour for luncheon.

The economies of the device are as amazing as the advantages. To accommodate the overflow in this one Passaic school the authorities would have had to erect a ten-room addition or new building, costing, with equipment, at least $55,000. The cost of the facilities which enabled the school to introduce the duplicate school plan and so accommodate the overflow was only $20,600. The annual overhead charges for this new equipment will be only $1,500. The annual overhead charges for the ten-room addition would have been $4,850. Here is a saving of no less than $34,400 in capital investment and of $3,350 in annual overhead charges. In other words, it cost Passaic $34,400 less to have a work, study and play school, accommodating all the children six hours and twenty minutes a day, than it would have cost to have an ordinary classroom school, accommodating all the children five hours a day, without gymnasium, shops or studios.

Even if you had never heard the phrase "Gary plan" you would know as soon as you entered it that this Passaic school was a new kind of school. When I visited the school I was taken first to the textile shop in the annex, where I found—strange sight for an elementary school—a dozen boys working interestedly on spinning machines and looms. Passaic has some of the largest woollen and worsted mills in the country, and any industrial training in the schools, it was felt, must take account of this demand. But there was nothing factory-like about the shop. These boys were not being trained to be mere machine tenders. The teacher was a skilled foreign craftsman, who was interested in giving his pupils a broad, scientific background in the craft of weaving. Processes, materials and machinery were being analyzed and understood. The boys were starting work not on power looms but on hand looms, in order that they might become familiar with the construction of the machinery as well as the putting together and threading of the fabric. On the shelves were bundles of towelling made by the boys in the shop for the use of the school. This was the real Gary touch.

This particular class was part of a group of eighty special vocational students. These were boys from the sixth, seventh and eighth grades who were over fourteen years and who had become school sick at their studies. Nothing could have prevented them from drifting out of the ordinary school into alley occupations. Most of them would have lost all



"The boys were starting to work on hand looms in order that they might become familiar with the construction of machinery as well as the putting together and threading of the fabric."

chance of acquiring any training whatever. This vocational course has kept them all in the school. Each boy spends half a day in one of the shops and half a day in the classroom. He has a chance to try each of the four main shops for ten weeks of the year before specializing. Not only have these boys found a new meaning in their classroom work, but of the twenty who are to graduate from the course this year eighteen, I was told, intend to continue a coöperative course in the high school. At the end of four years they will have not only their high school certificate, but a finished apprenticeship as well.

In the machine shop I found another group of vocational students working on the lathes and drills. Frederick O. Smith, the supervisor of manual and vocational training, told me that this class had coöperated with the boys in the cabinet shop in making some of the looms we had seen in the textile shop. It had been difficult to get the looms they needed, so in true Gary fashion he had called upon the skill and facilities of the school community to provide them. In the cabinet and printing shops I found not the vocational students, but the regular scholars, who, as part of the Gary plan, come into the shops every day for an hour's work. On the shelves were common groceries, which were used as texts for a wide range of discussion, bringing in geography and history and the arts and industries. One class was building an Indian village in the sand pile, putting it together gradually as they came to understand how the Indians made their tents and smoked their fish.

The two gymnasiums were full of bouncing, dancing children. When they had finished dancing they played stimulating ball games and returned to their classrooms, flushed and exhilarated, for work. You could not tell whether it was "gymnastics" or "supervised play" they were indulging in. All you knew was that they were living intently and that you wished every elementary school in New York were giving its children so active an education.

I was anxious to see the auditorium work, a feature of the Gary plan which has been much criticised in New York. Here in School 10 there was nothing remotely resembling "mass instruction." All this effort was devoted to making the auditorium hour, as I had seen it in Gary, an opportunity for dramatic and socialized expression. The school had not yet been equipped with stereopticon or motion pictures, but there was a victrola, and the music and choral singing and dramatizations convinced me anew of the possibilities of this Gary idea. In School 10 all the children go to auditorium for forty minutes every day. I saw two

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"I saw two delightful dramatizations of 'Little Boy Blue' and 'The Pied Piper' worked out by little children and done by them on the stage before an audience of other classes."

Wrestling Match No Place for a Lady? Pouf!

By Sarah Addington.

"A WRESTLING match is no place for a lady, even a reporter," reproved a kind friend severely as I set out for Madison Square Garden and the Stecher-Masked Marvel contest. "There will be blood and horrible muscles and vulgar people. If you enjoy bull fights, go ahead. I'm sure I don't envy you your work."

"Muscles aren't so horrible," I defended, picking out her weakest point. But it was with something of a quaver that I entered that swarming, tobacco-smoked lobby of the Garden, past the bawling programme venders and into the arena where men were to do dreadful things to each other—break bones and tear flesh perhaps—where blood was to flow free- and joyously.

The band was playing a sprightly air. A lady trailed in, a glittering jewel in her hair, the cerise folds of an evening coat falling from her shoulders. Men were smoking nonchalantly White coated men pressed their services, offering food, drink and the necessary material for smoking and chewing. This was no murder scene. It was more like a circus. Even the peanuts were cracking cheerily. The atmosphere was soothing to a frightened soul, and yet the thought still persisted: bones will snap and blood will flow; men will return to the primordial.

Oscar Sanger, the vocal teacher, sat in the box next to us, alert and interested and keeping vigorous time with his head to the noble strains of "America, I Love You." Hugo Münsterberg came in with a party. I assumed then he was there for the psychology of wrestling; now I'm more inclined to think he was out for a good fight. A fussily dressed woman with innumerable white plumes on her hat waved her programme enthusiastically around in the air, even before anything happened.

"The appetite for excitement," I moralized.

Mr. Humphreys, announcer, took the centre of the stage, the ring, the mat or whatever it is, and a great cheering and roaring and whistling broke out. Horrors, the mob! I gripped the rail of the box, closed my eyes, and then, opening one confusedly—and curiously—caught the gleam of a satiny back and huge, hunching shoulders. Bull Montana was climbing over and under the ropes.

"Down in front, lady!" called a standee at my back. I was actually standing up and stretching my neck at full length, all the better to see a brute of a wrestler! Blushes and stammers followed, but the awful fact was unaltered. Appetite for excitement, sure enough!

The next minute Bull Montana was slugging his opponent so fiercely that the crowd immediately ordered him off the stage, or whatever it is. Bull Montana then took it upon himself to give an exhibition of a man in a bestial fury. He pulled Young Hackenschmidt around by the ear, he cuffed him and pummelled him like a big, angry bear. The mob yelled, the referee hopped around excitedly, but that powerful, lunging, heavy faced man called Bull Montana fought on until the referee dragged him away.

"Scared?" asked a newspaper man in our box. "Why, don't you know that was just a beautiful frame-up?"

"What?"

"Sure," he went on lightly; "this is the worst game in the whole world for box office stunts. You didn't think he was really sore, did you?"

"Well, you'll have to admit he acted a bit annoyed," I answered crossly.

Before the big bout of the evening there were three other curtain raisers. The wrestlers did all kinds of interesting feats for the delight of the audience. A fat sergeant of the United States Army rolled around like a ball and did no credit to the Stars and Stripes by landing neatly on his back, panting energetically. A wrestler from Asbury Park gave a personification of Spring by a series of little leaps and dives hither and yon. He was ostensibly reaching for his enemy's legs, but he might just as well have been playing with the butterflies in all his grace and agility.

"Well?" asked the reporters.

"Interesting," I replied. "I don't see any blood, though."

At last the great moment had come; the Masked Marvel and Joe Stecher came down the aisle, Stecher, a nice looking youth, pleased and bashful like a boy out for a high school football game; the Marvel reminiscent of Ku Klux days in his woollen head covering, all black save for a big white nose and rolling eyeballs.

Mr. Humphreys delivered himself of a speech in his best oratorical style. The grotesque figure in the gray bathrobe kept bowing to the crowd's applause. Bowing at an end, wrestling began. "Catch as catch can, best two out of three," informed Mr. Humphreys.

Very gently they began, pawing around cautiously. Then a little stronger; and then, by a quick move, the Marvel was down and Stecher was working over his body for the desired flattening out process. Marvel twisted and turned; Stecher plugged away. I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Will you sit down, madam?" came an imperative request. It was so interesting, how could one remember to be polite?

"Sit on your feet," suggested one of the reporters.

After the strain was over and Stecher had won his two straight falls the crowd yelled, the band started up, everybody shook hands, and Mr. Humphreys made an announcement to the effect that Mr. Masked Marvel wanted to say that Joe Stecher was the best wrestler he ever met and he wished him all luck. The crowd yelled again, and we were off.

Back in my memory somewhere came strange, hazy phrases: "Appetite for excitement," "horrible muscles," "vulgar crowd," but I couldn't remember who had said them or to what they applied. I was thinking in terms of other things.

"You've ripped your glove," somebody reminded me.

"I know," I smiled. "I was clapping for Stecher."